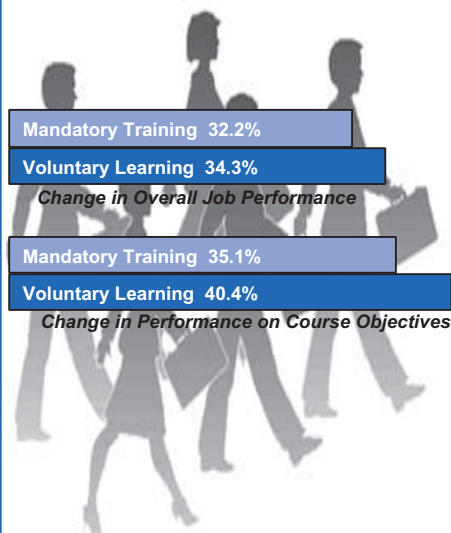


► **AN INFORMATIVE INCREASE:**  
Open enrollments for the National Capital Training Center jumped by more than 6 percent in the last year to about 11,000.



## SNAPSHOT

**Volunteers Lead: Mandatory training generates lower outcomes than voluntary learning.**



Source: American Society for Training & Development, "The 2000 ASTD Learning Outcomes Report."

## COVER STORY

### NASA Taps into TAP

Deep in the Mojave desert, 604 NASA employees took turns at a 45-minute assessment in March. All personnel — from top leadership to clerical staff — at the Dryden Flight Research Center in Edwards, Calif., participated in the Training Assessment Profile, which the Graduate School developed to identify training needs.

"I want quantitative data so I can structure a training program where every dollar is spent most effectively. That's our public fiduciary responsibility," says Susan Miller, director of human resources, management and development at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's primary installation for flight research.

The customizable assessment program, called TAP, identified and prioritized clusters of critical skills needed across the organization. A report provided in May gave Miller a basis for distinguishing the right training courses.

The top priority list generated by TAP included courses on:

- Leadership skills
- Conflict resolution; and

► Negotiating techniques.

"The assessment identifies disconnects between how supervisors — and the employees who report directly to them — perceive the skill requirements of a given individual or job and what the training requirements are," explains Lee Williams-Lana, a

Graduate School employee who administered the assessment and has been working on-site for 10 months under the interagency agreement between NASA Dryden and the Graduate School.

Maureen Hetzel,

the Graduate School's director in the Western region, says that TAP uses a logical sequence: "Is it important? If it is, do I have the requisite skills or do I need training? Is it an area that I want to discuss with my supervisor?"

TAP comes in a "scannable" and a disc-based version. A Web-based design is in the wings. Miller chose the former, and used the results in a gap-analysis chart. The information gleaned was well-received. "Culturally, we are an engineering organization. We believe in statistics and graphs," says Miller. "This gives us hard data."

**For more about TAP, contact Darrell Fung at (415) 281-7022.**



Photo by Carla Thomas

## UPDATES

### A Nifty Agreement

The Johns Hopkins University School of Professional Studies and the Graduate School, USDA will debut an innovative venture in September. Under the agreement, students seeking certificates of accomplishment from the Graduate School's Evening & Weekend courses in business and management, information technology and paralegal studies could simultaneously apply to Johns Hopkins. Those accepted by the School of Professional Studies could then transfer up to 60 Graduate School credits to Johns Hopkins.

"Rather than taking an occasional course or two, students can now think of us as a more flexible provider of affordable, quality education leading to a degree," says Donald Shandler, director of continuing education.

Although the Graduate School has never awarded degrees, many courses already receive college credit recommendations from the American Council on

Education. The new agreement gives students another option. They can choose a ready-made program to obtain certificates as well as degrees.

Why the collaboration?

"Both parties saw ... long-term, multidimensional components of a strategic partnership," says Shandler, a proponent of increased cooperation in continuing education. The agreement between the two institutions follows on the footsteps of a similar agreement with Georgetown University in April.

#### What You Need for Acceptance

- ▶ A high school degree or its equivalent.
- ▶ At least 15 transferable college-level credits.
- ▶ A minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.5.
- ▶ A grade B or above in Graduate School courses.

### Don't Miss the Deadline

Nominations for the Deming Award are due by October 2. The annual award honors W. Edwards Deming and his 22-year association with the Graduate School. It is presented to federal organizations or civilian military branches that successfully complete innovative employee-development and training initiatives with measurable results. For information on applications, call (202) 314-3300 or e-mail [pubaffairs@grad.usda.gov](mailto:pubaffairs@grad.usda.gov).



**Military Minded:** Nina Harbour — adjunct faculty member and speaker at the American Society of Military Comptrollers' annual three-day convention — joined Graduate School staff at their vendor booth in June. Civilian and military ASMC members flew in from around the world for the convention. Harbour's topic targeted retirement issues. Lined up from left to right are John Amey, senior program manager from the National Capital Training Center, Darrel Fung, program manager from the Western Training Center, and Don Singleton, program manager from the Southwest Training Center. The Northeast Training Center's program manager Jack Peppard kneels in front.

### Web Wizardry:

The new online course catalog at [www.grad.usda.gov](http://www.grad.usda.gov) makes life easier. Features enable users to:

- ▶ Choose courses from specific business units on the main menu.
- ▶ Select courses by subject.
- ▶ Find better examples and hints on the main menu.
- ▶ Ensure confirmed classes are guaranteed to go.
- ▶ Consult closed or canceled status for Evening & Weekend classes and e-mail wait-listing request.
- ▶ Check whether courses can be contracted or delivered onsite and indicate interest.
- ▶ Note courses with scheduled sessions in the next 12 months and wait list.

## TRAINING

### From the Executive Director



As summer rolls to a close and the fiscal year ends, we see our business peak. To expedite registrations and ensure that customers receive prompt service, we have set up more convenient access via the Internet. Our Web site has expanded, and we are improving and enhancing our new online registration systems.

Our online catalog already has new dates for courses, and we are moving to a real-time registration form with rapid acknowledgments and notifications for credit card purchases. We expect the registration system to be up and running before the end of the fiscal year.

The increased customer use of our Web site has been impressive. Generated statistics that track use tell us that we have:

- ▶ At least 100,000 hits per day.
- ▶ More than three million hits per month.
- ▶ An average user session length of 12 minutes.

In this regional edition of News and Information, we look at progress made on many fronts. Web access is a technological boon that unites our regions and helps eliminate geographic limitations. We count this development as a success. These improvements, which are part of our continuing efforts to refine business processes, help make the Graduate School, USDA as customer oriented as possible.

Philip H. Hudson

### Faculty Conference Renews

The quick-witted adages met with laughing appreciation. "I live in fear of not having public speaking," "In times of education, the first casualty is the syllabus," and "Things are more like they are now than they ever have been," rolled off Mark Minasi's tongue as he took his role as keynote speaker, author and educator to task. The levity and incisive comments capped a morning of learning for more than 150 instructors and staff attending the annual half-day Faculty Development Conference in Washington, D.C., in June.

Two time slots offered the choice of 12 workshops.



Don Shandler, director of continuing education, introduced Minasi at the luncheon.

manage in the classroom, presenters provided insight on handling challenging students, cultural diversity and stress.

Through the hubbub of networking, interested instructors headed for each session with alacrity as faculty morphed into students. Their presence proved a point. As Philip Hudson, the Graduate School's executive director, said in greeting assembled attendees at the start of the conference, "It's a really great institution because of all the work you do."



Mark Minasi, author of "Tales From the Trenches."

▶ Sessions on creativity covered learning styles, teaching games and foreign-language pointers.

▶ Workshops on technology addressed classroom application, Power-Point as a tool and Internet use.

▶ And to help faculty



Philip Hudson, executive director, presented longevity awards.

### Kudos Corner

In July, Alice Lloyd, a Webmaster, carbon copied the Graduate School's Center for Applied Technology in a letter to the District of Columbia's Department of Employment Services. Some telling excerpts: "Eleven months ago I received notice from my company that I was to be laid off. ... Retraining money was ... used for a three-month Webmaster certification program at ... [the Graduate School's] Center for Applied Technology. ... By February, I had my Webmaster certification, and I am now happy to say that I am making almost twice the salary I was making before I was laid off in early September."

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## WHAT'S NEW

**Summer Reading:** The latest issue of the Government Accountants Journal ran the article "Accounting Reform in the Former Soviet Republics: An Essential Ingredient for Economic Independence," co-authored by Nicholas M. Zacchea, a Graduate School instructor for the Government Audit Training Institute.

**A Welcome Announcement:** Patricia DeFerrari has joined Evening & Weekend Programs as the program manager for quantitative studies, law and natural history. She has taught adult learners at the universities of Marymount and Georgetown, and coordinated adult education programs for Denver University's Bureau of Educational Studies. She holds a bachelor's degree in English, a master's in education, a master's in religion and culture, and a doctorate in Catholic theology.

**Age-Old Distinction:** Correspondence Programs confers a certificate in the growing field of Elderlaw. The program, which offers participants flexible learning at their own pace, place or time, addresses the needs of those who want to serve the nation's fastest growing population. Between 1995 and 2010, the population over the age of 85 will grow an estimated 56 percent; the population between the ages of 65 and 84 will increase 13 percent. For more information about the certificate, call (202) 314-3670.

**Spanish Placement Possibilities:** In August, Evening & Weekend Programs' Foreign Language Office will pilot a Web-based placement test for Spanish language classes. The 25-minute test, which evaluates reading comprehension, grammar and vocabulary, will estimate a student's skill levels and recommend corresponding class levels. For more information about the test, go to [www.grad.usda.gov](http://www.grad.usda.gov).

